

Kilpatrick's Concept of Leadership



LEADERSHIP STYLE AND PRACTICE: OGDEN, FISHER, CARROLL, AND KILPATRICK

Ogden: The New Reformation

This essay weaves Kilpatrick's concept of leadership into the discussion of Ogden's, Fisher's, and Carroll's concepts of leadership.^[1] One objective of this article is to compare the leadership styles of Ogden, Fisher, and Carroll with that of Kilpatrick. Ogden calls for a "new reformation" within the Christian ministry. His "Introduction" focuses upon the "unfinished business" of the restoration of the priesthood of all believers.^[2] He reflects upon Luther's statement: "Everyone who has been baptized may claim that he already has been consecrated a priest, bishop or pope."^[3] For Ogden, every Christian is God's representative. In other words, each believer is God's guardian to the other believer, and, in a sense, each believer is a go-between for the other before God. Ogden puts it this way:

The New Reformation seeks nothing less than the radical transformation of the self-perception of all believers so we see ourselves as vital channels through whom God mediates his life to other members of the body of Christ and the world.^[4]

One of the revolutionary concepts in ministry is that "All God's people are ministers," writes Ogden.^[5] Even though the Reformers sought to restore the priesthood of all believers, they never fully renewed the reality of this belief or biblical custom. The clerical structure of the church continued to dominate the lives of men and women throughout the Reformation period. Even today, this philosophy of Institutionalism is still practiced among many denominations. This traditional power structure is a carry over from the Reformation. Kilpatrick also describes well the Protestant dilemma: "The

truth is that the whole ecclesiastical structure of Protestantism is built upon the tradition of the Roman church, not upon the traditions of the apostles.”[6]

One objective in Ogden’s book is to recapture the servant/leadership model of ministry. He desires the recapturing of the “church as a living organism.”[7] He states it nicely, when he writes:

Everyone has a part in this play. Every believer is a necessary part of the drama that God is producing, the drama of salvation history. We are on stage together, pastors and people alike. There is no longer a select, professional union of actors. In the body of Christ, all the ‘actors’ have a direct connection to the Producer, the Creator, and the Choreographer of History. The debilitating class distinction between clergy and laity is dashed. The pastor no longer plays all the parts, but like a director draws out the hidden talents of myriad actors and encourages them to perform according to their skills.[8]

For Ogden, “Christianity is essentially a lay movement.”[9] Generally speaking, this is not the concept practiced by churches as a whole. Nevertheless, he does seem to have fully assessed the typical so-called worship service as practiced by most churches, and he has also captured forcefully the deterioration prevalent within many Christian communities. For example, he writes, “The experience of worship in an institutional framework is something done to you, in front of you, or for you, but not by you.”[10]

Ogden candidly states: “The church in general has adopted a leadership style that is at odds with an organism view.”[11] He seeks to call attention to the model of ministry as initiated by Jesus. Ogden reminds his readers of Jesus’ conversation with His disciples about leadership. He contrasts the Pharisee’s model of ministry with the model of Jesus’ ministry; one is a style to repudiate, the other is a style to emulate.[12] He writes,

Jesus tells us, first, what servant leadership is not. Comparing the behavior he expected of his followers with the model of both gentile and Jewish leadership, Jesus describes the prevailing concept of greatness and then calls his disciples to walk away from the only model they had known. He calls them to be immersed in a radically different model he has lived out before them.[13]

“The Gentile leaders’ style,” writes Ogden, “is captured by the word ‘over.’”[14] He points out that the word translated “lord it over” is almost always used in the New Testament in negative terms.[15] Kilpatrick, in his brilliant sketch of **Hebrew 13:7**, expresses the same concern about leaders who “lord it over” other Christians. In reality both men seek to undergird their ideas from Scripture, but both also approach the subject of leadership through the lens of certain theological principles set forth in the Scriptures. The amount of time and space taken here to review the beliefs of Kilpatrick, although considerable, is easily justifiable. The issues contested encapsulate the warp and woof of the continuing controversy within the Christian church. The traditions of the church made it difficult, if not almost impossible, to hear the word of God correctly. Kilpatrick aptly remarks:

The King’s [King James] insistence upon rendering the Greek word “hegeomai” as “RULE” IN Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24, and elsewhere. According

to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "hegeomai" means "to lead." To render verse 17 as "Obey those who have the rule over you. . ." is a complete mistranslation of two key words in this passage, obey and rule.

The word "obey" is from the Greek "peitho" and means "to persuade, win over, listen to; the obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion" (W.E. Vine). Since "hegeomai" means "to lead," the simple admonition of this passage is, "Consider the example of your leaders and imitate their faith." The RSV says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." NEB: "Obey your leaders and defer to them."

The KJV renders verse 7 as, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." Paul said more correctly, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God" (RSV). Phillips renders it, "Never forget your leaders, who first spoke to you the Word of God." NEB: "Remember your leaders, those who first spoke God's message to you." Today's English Version: "Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you." What can we conclude except that the word "rule" is a gross mistranslation. Those who look to this passage as a proof-text for eldership "authority" will find no help whatever from the Greek text. It is even questionable that the passage refers to elders, since they are not mentioned. It more likely refers to the apostles or inspired evangelists who "first spoke to them the Word of God." Most of all, there is not the slightest hint of a ruling hierarchy contained in these verses.[\[16\]](#)

Another startling revelation, as stated by Ogden, is that "ministry is not confined to the church building":[\[17\]](#) He further says that Christians are now learning that the church is simply a "base of operations to support and equip people to live out their lives in Christian witness in the work environment."[\[18\]](#) Kilpatrick, too, is therefore on target when he says, "We must restudy the subject of worship so that we might take it out of the church building and put it back into everyday lives."[\[19\]](#) Again Kilpatrick writes: "Early Christians did not 'go to church' to worship. They were worshippers who came together to share with each other the things they had in common, namely their faith in Jesus Christ and the great hope of salvation."[\[20\]](#) Once more, Kilpatrick corners the very heart of Christian worship when he says, "We must 'wear' our religion daily instead of 'performing' it on Sunday morning inside a building. Each Christian is God's temple. Each Christian is God's priest. Worship is perpetual. However, we like the Jews, continue to practice our religion in an assembly."[\[21\]](#)

Ogden, like Kilpatrick, calls for a renewal of the biblical concept of ministry. Both men seek to reestablish the priesthood of all believers. Kilpatrick, as noted above, rejects the institutional structure of the church that is so prevalent among many Christians. Ogden and Kilpatrick advocate the "church as organism," not as an institutional, hierarchical organization with offices and officers. Again, Ogden writes, "We are in the midst of something as radical as a paradigm shift from the church as institution to the church as organism."[\[22\]](#) Ogden also points out, with justice, that "In the New Testament the church is described, among other things, as the household of God, the people of God, the bride of Christ, and a fellowship of the Holy Spirit."[\[23\]](#)

Fisher: The 21st Century Pastor

David Fisher's book on *The 21st Century Pastor* is more concerned with the role of the pastor in the local congregation than he is with a servant/leadership model of ministry. Fisher's clergy/laity model is the opposite of Ogden's servant/leadership model. Fisher's emphasis upon the authority of the pastor is a hangover from the Reformation movement inherited from Catholicism and the Church of England. He does not seem to completely capture the original concept of ministry postulated by Jesus. It is not wrong to ordain or appoint individuals to work with the church on a full time basis, but the problem is in elevating these individuals to officers, as in a corporation. Whether one is pastor or elder, no one has the right to exercise authority over another Christian.

There does appear to be tension throughout his book as to the proper role of pastor in his relationship to the church. For example, he writes, "I had been David Fisher for twenty-six years. Suddenly I was 'Reverend Fisher.' A new identity was laid on me, and I couldn't be just me anymore."[\[24\]](#) He laments the "triumph of individualism in America."[\[25\]](#) He observes: "America has created a church filled with people who refuse to let anyone tell them what to believe or do."[\[26\]](#) Fisher demonstrates most impressively his own role as pastor when he pungently states,

Only those who open their hearts and souls to me and my ministry will grow from my ministry. Those who resist me or my pastoral authority not only tend to be unhappy, but they cut themselves off from the spiritual nourishment at the center of the church. One cannot be served well by someone to whom one will not open one's soul.[\[27\]](#)

There appears to be a stark contrast between Fisher and Kilpatrick in their perception of the preacher or pastor. Fisher places emphasis upon the authority of the pastor, whereas Kilpatrick emphasizes the eldership, as it is commonly called within the Churches of Christ. However, Kilpatrick seeks to undermine the traditional concept of authority assumed by many elders and preachers; for example, he writes in his editorial, "The Fear of Toleration," to bring attention to the usurpation of power exercised by some Christians over other Christians.[\[28\]](#) In this editorial, he calls attention to a lawsuit filed in November 1984, by a member of the Sixth & Izard Church of Christ. This suit (Brown vs. Gipson) was filed against the elders of this church. Some members of the congregation wanted to inspect the financial records of the church, but they were refused access to the books. The elders, as reported by Kilpatrick, "maintain that they have total authority over such matters and that members have no right to challenge the decision of the eldership."[\[29\]](#)

In order to reinforce the unequal position of the "ruling class," the elders of this congregation brought in Hardeman Nichols from the Preston Road School of Preaching (Texas) to deliver two messages on the "authority" of the elders. Kilpatrick writes: "According to him no charge could ever be brought against the elders because they had been invested with divine authority to carry out the will of God on earth."[\[30\]](#) Again he writes, "'The members,' says Nichols, 'are to obey the elders when they agree with them, and to submit to them when they don't agree!'"[\[31\]](#) Once more, Kilpatrick draws attention to this highhanded seizure of power:

It is still amazing to me how that our "elderships" can so easily ignore the

words of Jesus who spoke against the very thing that preachers and elders now advocate. Jesus told his disciples that the Gentiles “lorded it over them” but that it would not be so among them. Our people seem bound and determined to prove Jesus wrong. They do indeed lord it over the congregation. They take comfort in the idea that “lording it over” has reference to a harsh, dictatorial rule and that this is what Jesus meant. A little investigation will show otherwise. An elder or group of elders who have a body of people under submission are “master,” rulers over that body. To be the “master over” is to “lord over” and it doesn’t matter whether the rule be harsh or lenient, or dictatorial or benevolent. In either case we have a man or a group of men acting in an “official” capacity over the household of God which God never intended.[\[32\]](#)

It does not appear from Fisher’s writings that he would espouse an ultra authoritative position of power in the pastor. But, on the other hand, he is not clear as to the exact outlook he advocates. In spite of this lack of clarity on the part of Fisher, he still reveals, so it seems to this author, his concern over the importance of “pastoral authority.” He further states, “Wise leaders distinguish carefully between the authority conferred by an office and the authority earned over time.”[\[33\]](#) His use of the terms “Reverend Fisher,”[\[34\]](#) “pastoral authority,”[\[35\]](#) “authority conferred by an office,”[\[36\]](#) and “authority earned over time”[\[37\]](#) appear to contradict the servant/leadership role inaugurated by Jesus. For example, Matthew records seven woes enunciated against the Pharisees;[\[38\]](#) and, immediately Jesus censures their desire for preeminence. Jesus uses the following pregnant words to call attention to their self-righteous spirit:

Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (**Matthew 23:5-11**).

Fisher, in spite of the negative criticism advanced by this author, still shares insightful information concerning the burden of responsibility on the part of the pastor. But this pastoral care, as advocated by Fisher, is associated with elders within the Churches of Christ rather than with the clergy. His chapter on “Jars of Clay: The Pastor’s Burden” is well worth reading.[\[39\]](#) In fact, this chapter is one of the highlights of the book. One cannot find fault with his emphasis upon leadership as a gift from God. But this gift does not entitle one to exercise authority over other Christians.[\[40\]](#)

Carroll: As One with Authority

Carroll begins his book (chapter 1) with the demise of authority among pastors. He recalls the colonial period in which the sermons were the only voice of authority that the congregations were pledged to obey.[\[41\]](#) He recalls the first time he encountered a confrontation to his authority. This challenge resulted over the "racial justice issues" in

which he received criticism for his preaching about these controversial concerns and his public involvement.^[42] He also laments the challenge to his authority that occurred in a "setting whose epistemological assumptions" radically differed with his.^[43] One can sympathize with his feelings, but the authority of his beliefs should rest not upon Carroll's authority, but upon God's authority.^[44]

He puts forth three well-known views of Max Webber on which authority is asserted within group leadership: (1) authority exercised on traditional grounds, (2) authority resting on charismatic grounds of the individual, and (3) authority based on rational-legal grounds inherent in the one elevated to authority to issue commands.^[45] But Fisher seeks to redefine these three sources of authority as (1) ultimate authority, and (2) penultimate authority. For Fisher, ultimate authority is based on experiences and convictions on which authority is based; on the other hand, penultimate authority, according to Fisher, deals with the legitimate exercise of power in a group.^[46]

Ultimate authority is the concept of the leader exercising authority to lead that is granted to him through the "group's core values and beliefs and contribute to their realization."^[47] Ultimately, this authority is granted to the leader based on the belief that the traditions of the church are based upon the "church's tradition(s)—and to those who interpret them—because they believe, in last analysis, that these authorities are grounded in God and God's purposes for the world."^[48]

Penultimate authority is "contributed historically to the authority of religious leaders."^[49] In other words, this authority is handed down "as a member of a priestly caste, the possession of unique physical or psychic attributes, special knowledge of a sacred tradition, charisma and exemplary sanctity, or various kinds of expertise."^[50]

Carroll seeks to contrast the Catholic model of ministry with the Protestant model of ministry.^[51] He calls attention to the "sacramental person" (Catholic concept) as one that bears the sacred in the midst of life. On the other hand, the Protestant view of ministry is essentially the same. Protestant churches continue to give greater authority to the so-called personal or inward call of the clergy as a sacramental or representative role.^[52] Carroll captures very clearly the nineteenth century mindset of the evangelical Protestants in their disagreeing with the sacramental aspects of ministry, but, on the other hand, he clearly develops the Protestant view of clergy as having a special relationship to God.^[53] The ultimate conclusion is that "both catholic and evangelical perspective agrees that the ordained person has a special relationship to God and is God's representative. There is a conviction that she or he is an instrument through which Christ is at work."^[54]

Again, one sees tension in Carroll's strong leadership and symmetrical authority. He writes, "The secret of exercising power is not to hoard one's power or use it paternalistically but to learn together to honor each other's gifts and use one's own gift to strengthen and support the other."^[55] Carroll challenges clergy "to exercise their leadership authority so that individuals and congregations are helped to respond in ways that are Christianly apt."^[56]

CONCLUSION

Both Kilpatrick and Ogden seek to reinstate the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers. These two men labor to rid the church of a priesthood within a priesthood. A perusal of Fisher's book reveals that the modern church has substituted the *clergy* for the *priest* of the Reformation. Kilpatrick calls attention to the current concept of authority as exercised by some elders within the Churches of Christ. Many elders within the Churches of Christ have assumed the role of "pope" within their own congregations. In other words, to differ with the elders is to disagree with God Himself. When they speak it is *ex cathedra*.

On the other hand, Fisher and Carroll espouse the more traditional view of the clergy—a view formally maintained before, during, and after the Reformation. The modern church has exchanged the clergy for the priest with its continuing role of authority. It is not uncommon for the clergy in some denominations to run the local congregation with an iron fist. What the pastor says is final—no recourse. Even though Fisher and Carroll have many helpful insights in their books; nevertheless, these men have not grasped, so it seems to me, the proper role of the pastor in their relationship to other Christians.

[1] See "Part 1" for a more detailed review of Kilpatrick's view on leadership.

[2] Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 11-26.

[3] Ibid. 11, quoted in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 54.

[4] Ibid. 12.

[5] Ibid.

[6] R. L. Kilpatrick, "Restructuring the Church," in *Ensign* IX, no 10 (February 1982), 200.

[7] Ogden, *Reformation*, 19.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] Ibid., 24

[11] Ibid., 169.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[\[14\]](#) Ibid.

[\[15\]](#) Ibid. On the other hand, there does appear to be tension between the above statements on leadership and his interpretation of 1Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 3:5, Romans 12:8, and Hebrews 13:17 (see pp. 148-151). It appears, so it seems to this author, that he has not properly translated these verses correctly in light of Matthew 20:20-28. For a detailed study of these Scriptures, see “An Analysis of Hebrews 13:17” by Dallas Burdette, paper submitted to Dr. Rex Turner Sr., in partial fulfillment of course requirements in Hebrews (NT 4319A) 1993 Spring Quarter, August 12, 1993.

[\[16\]](#) Kilpatrick, “The Continuing Influence of King James,” *Ensign* XV, no. 7 (August 1986). 137.

[\[17\]](#) Ogden, *Reformation* 21.

[\[18\]](#) Ibid.

[\[19\]](#) R. L. Kilpatrick, “Restructuring the Church,” 189.

[\[20\]](#) Ibid.

[\[21\]](#) Ibid. 191.

[\[22\]](#) Ogden, *Reformation*, 29.

[\[23\]](#) Ibid.

[\[24\]](#) David Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 20.

[\[25\]](#) Ibid. 232. One might observe that this kind of attitude was responsible for persecution against Christians in Catholicism and Protestantism

[\[26\]](#) Ibid.

[\[27\]](#) Ibid., 233.

[\[28\]](#) R. L. Kilpatrick, “The Fear of Toleration,” in *Ensign* XIV, no. 1 (January 1986), 2, 17-20.

[\[29\]](#) Ibid. 18.

[\[30\]](#) Ibid.

[\[31\]](#) Ibid.

[\[32\]](#) Ibid. 18-19. See also R. L. Kilpatrick, “Concerning ‘Authority,’” in *Ensign* XIV, no. 8 (September 1986): 142, where he says,

Words such as ekklesia (church), presbuteros (elder), episkopos (Bishop), hegeomai (rule), and others, were in ancient times common, everyday household words which since then have been given a technical meaning that was never intended – and some just plain mistranslated (ekklesia – church). We have made Greek adjectives (older) English nouns (Elders). We have taken functional words (overseers) and made them titles of positions (Bishops). We have made “office” a place where “officials” preside over the congregation, when actually the word means nothing more than “function” or “work.” We have ordained certain ones to “rule” over us, just like the Israelites who appointed themselves a king to rule over them, contrary to the approval of God.

[33] Fisher, *21st Century Pastor*, 233.

[34] Ibid., 20.

[35] Ibid., 233.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Matthew chapter 23.

[39] Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor*, 114-140.

[40] Since this author has not talked with Fisher, perhaps it is best to assign another meaning to the word authority than is commonly employed. Fisher does not sufficiently define his term to inform the reader as to the exact connotation he wishes to attach to the word authority.

[41] Jackson W. Carroll, *As One With Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox press, 1991), 14.

[42] Ibid. 14.

[43] Ibid. 15.

[44] Carroll's first chapter is a section about the demise of his authority in the congregation. It appears, so it seems to this author, that he did not adequately prepare his listeners for the source of all authority, namely, Jesus the Christ. Yet, Carroll does offer some tremendous insights into the true nature of ministry, and the true nature of the church.

[45] Carroll, *Authority*, 40-41.

[46] Ibid. 41-43.

[47] Ibid. 43

[\[48\]](#) Ibid. 43.

[\[49\]](#) Ibid. 44-50.

[\[50\]](#) Ibid. 45.

[\[51\]](#) Ibid. 46-47.

[\[52\]](#) Ibid. 47.

[\[53\]](#) Ibid. 47.

[\[54\]](#) Ibid. 48.

[\[55\]](#) Ibid. 95.

[\[56\]](#) Ibid. 120.